

Many New Yorkers Live 1,000 to an Acre Although Vast Areas Lie Vacant



MODEL TENEMENTS, BUILT BY MRS. W. K. VANDERBILT, SR., AT 78TH STREET AND THE EAST RIVER.



CLINTON STREET, MANHATTAN. THE MOST CONGESTED SECTION IN THE CITY

Philanthropic Persons Seeking More Busily Than Ever to Find an Answer and a Remedy.

A GOOD many persons have been thinking this winter about the present and the future comfort of the inhabitants of New York City. What with the unusual cold, the lack of regular employment and the increase in the cost of living, those who dwell on the border line of poverty have felt the pinch more than ever. According to the records of the charitable organizations, as much money has been required for the assistance of the needy as in any previous similar period, even in the so-called panic years. One conservative estimate puts the number of those in Manhattan who have required help at sixty thousand.

The need of financial help has been further illustrated by the increase in the number of women applying for permission to take homeless babies to board. Young married couples are assisting and obtaining assistance in paying rent by going home, if a \$9 apartment in the tenement regions can be described as home, to live with the parents of one or the other. The charity workers of Brooklyn and Queens have been looking with concern upon the increasing congestion in their boroughs caused by the overflow from the tenement houses of Manhattan. Pored out of the heart of the congested district on the East Side by the high rents, many have taken their way across the bridges and settled down about the eastern termini, in the same kind of buildings they left behind them. The congestion in certain of the wards at the end of the Williamsburg Bridge has increased, according to one Brooklyn charity worker, until now in one case the density of population is 200 to the acre and in another

obliged to eliminate some items of food from their diet.

Some persons have been taking action regarding the housing of the inhabitants of this city in a manner suitable to the development of decent family life and reasonable in price. Various groups have been giving attention to this phase of the question, and some of them have put the results of their thinking into the form of bills which have been introduced into the Legislature. Students of statistics, such as the Federation of Churches, the real estate speculators, the transit companies and the officials of the school system have been trying to figure out the direction which the overflow streams of population will take. The results are interesting. The Federation of Churches, taking the last census as a basis, has worked out the trend of population since the state census was taken in 1905. The following are some of the results:

The East Side bounded by Catharine street, the Bowery, Fourth avenue and 14th street still has the greatest density of population in the city. Strange as it may seem, this has even increased since 1905. This is the district of which Lawrence Veiller, the housing expert, wrote in 1905: "No conception of the existing conditions can be obtained from any general statements. To say that the lower East Side of New York is the most densely populated spot in the habitable globe gives no adequate idea of the real conditions. To say that in one section of the city the density of population is 1,000 to the acre, and that the greatest density of population in the most densely populated part of Bombay is but 750 to the acre, in France 485 to the acre, in Paris 434, in London 355, in Glasgow 350, in Calcutta 294, gives no adequate realization of the state of affairs. No more does it to say that in many city blocks on the East Side there is often a population of from 2,000 to 3,000 persons, a population equal to that of a good sized village. The only way that one



THE KITCHEN KNOWN AS THE LIVING ROOM IN THE NEW VANDERBILT TENEMENTS.



SLICING A CEMETERY AT THE NORTHERN END OF MANHATTAN TO MAKE ROOM FOR A RAPIDLY GROWING POPULATION.



THE ZONE OF DETACHED DWELLINGS IN LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND, BUILT BY THE MUNICIPALITY.



CONGESTED AND BADLY VENTILATED TENEMENT OF THE OLD TYPE.

Vigorous Efforts to Obtain Building Restrictions That Will Prevent Demoralizing Congestion.

thinks about the congestion situation in New York:

"In 1900 Brooklyn had 10.2 persons per dwelling and The Bronx had 10.1. Queens and Richmond had in 1900 6.3 and 6 persons per dwelling, respectively, while Philadelphia had only 5.4 per dwelling and Baltimore 5.7. The basic reason for the congestion of New York is that homes are not built on its available land, and that the multiple family dwelling—though not a necessity—is spreading from borough to borough. The basic reason for this condition, in turn, is that landlordism prevails in greater New York to an extent equal to the total of Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and St. Louis combined. Queens and Richmond are the only boroughs having a smaller percentage of landlordism than other American cities of 500,000 or over. New York has twenty times as many families in eleven family dwellings as Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, St. Louis and Baltimore put together."

It is pointed out that with an area greater than that of any other American city, an area capable of housing nearly 13,000,000 persons if the density were only 75 to the acre, apparently the multiple family dwelling designed for Manhattan is considered to be the chief type available for housing the whole population of the city. Upward of twenty-five hundred tenement houses five or more stories in height have been erected in The Bronx, and more than a thousand in Brooklyn in the last ten years since the tenement law went into effect. This type of building is particularly in evidence in the neighborhoods where the Russian Jew has taken up his home.

What can be done to change this tendency? The Legislature has been asked to

ward 167. In one ward, the 16th, near the end of the Williamsburg Bridge, the density is 278.7 persons to the acre.

"It is recognized in Manhattan," said this worker, "that the charity organizations of that borough are getting the money, while we are getting the problem, for those nearest to the poverty line are moving across the bridge. The influx of the Jews has pushed the Germans back. The Queensboro Bridge is furnishing Queens with a similar problem, and we have not the money of Manhattan to meet it."

The cost of assisting the needy has gone up, in company with the cost of living when provided by one's self. John A. Kingsbury, the general agent of the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, said that an investigation had shown that the prices of those foodstuffs commonly regarded as essentials had risen 24.5 per cent within the last year, and that a family of five could not maintain a normal standard of living in New York to-day on less than \$1,200 a year. Some articles, such as potatoes, have increased in cost more than 100 per cent. Families whose incomes have not increased proportionately have been

can understand the real conditions is to go down into the streets of these districts and see the thousands of persons thronging them and making them impassable. So congested have become the conditions of some of the quarters of this city that it is not an exaggeration to say that there are more people living there than the land or the atmosphere can with safety sustain. The limits have not only been reached, but have long been passed."

This district, however, has been able to gorge itself with thousands of additional human beings since that was written. The population, according to the last census, is now 542,061, or 23,763 greater than it was in 1905. There is only one city in Italy that has a population exceeding this, and there are not a dozen cities in the United States which can claim a larger number of persons. This is an average of 658 persons to the acre.

There are certain areas on the East Side which have shown marked gains in population, and also in congestion. The chief of these are in the L-shaped tract north of the Manhattan end of the Williamsburg Bridge bounded by Rivington, Allen and East 3d streets, First avenue, East

9th street, Avenue D and Columbia street. In this area of 18,008 acres, a tract less than a quarter section homestead such as Uncle Sam gives away in the West, there were living in 1910 124,347 persons, or 300 to the acre. This was a gain in the half decade of 7,503. In the tract bounded by Rivington and East 3d streets and Avenues B and D the population was 382.38 to the acre. There is still room to add to this population. Under one interpretation of the present tenement house law, which requires a certain amount of air space for each adult and each child, that nine persons, a family of two adults and seven children, may dwell in three rooms, it is estimated that 1,300 persons can be housed legally on an acre anywhere in New York City. The acreage on which this is based includes the streets, which, of course, are not occupied by houses.

The zone of Manhattan between 14th and 62d streets, although having a population of 508,211, lost 29,918 in the course of the five years. This doubtless is to be accounted for by the number of loft, office and store buildings erected in this district in the course of that time. The chief losses were in the neighborhood of Union and

Madison squares, in the block bounded by Park and Sixth avenues and 35th and 42d streets and around the terminus of the Queensboro Bridge.

West of Sixth avenue there were decreases in population everywhere, except in the Tenderloin district, between 24th and 35th streets, and the negro district, in West 59th street. The more southerly and older section of the Tenderloin shows a moderate falling off in numbers of inhabitants.

The greatest percentage of increase in population was along the west side of Manhattan and north of Central Park. Between 62d street and West 110th street, west of the park, the population received additions to the number of 23,157, the total population in 1910 being 172,067. This rapidity of growth along the line of the subway was shown clear to the Harlem River and across into The Bronx. Between West 110th and West 155th streets, west of Lenox avenue, the population increased from 157,232 to 235,247, and the Inwood section north of that point, comprising the rest of Manhattan Island, almost exactly trebled its population, the growth being from 14,575 to 42,905.

If one were plotting the changes in population on Manhattan on a map which did not show the subway route that route could almost be picked out by the lines of increase. For instance, in the strip between

West 110th street and West 155th streets, bounded by Amsterdam avenue and the Hudson River, there is not a section which did not grow at least 69 per cent between 1905 and 1910. There were five sections which showed an increase of 100 per cent or more. They were: 110th to 114th streets, from 2,367 to 4,965, or 195 per cent; 114th to 122d streets, from 642 to 2,834, a gain of 496 per cent; 122d to 125th streets, from 4,809 to 9,826, or approximately 100 per cent; 134th to 138th streets, from a population of only 389 to a total of 8,574, a gain of 2,104 per cent, and 142d to 146th streets, from 2,932 to 7,563, an increase of 163 per cent.

The territory north of West 155th street did not languish and impoverish the owners thereof through the payment of taxes, between West 155th and West 158th streets, in the neighborhood of Audubon and Highbridge parks, the inhabitants grew in numbers from 2,118 to 4,415, or 108 per cent, while the next strip, between 158th and 165th streets, multiplied 147 per cent, the population in 1910 being 11,871. In the next section, extending north to 151st street, the gain was from 2,881 to 17,356, or 584 per cent, the piece of ground showing the third greatest gain on Manhattan.

in walking distance of the tracks of the elevated and subway lines.

What will follow the opening of the new subways which are about to be built? The student of humanity, the school authorities, the transit companies and the land owners all are interested. The first mentioned fears that, unless something is done to lower, unless the laws are changed, unless the incentive to hold unoccupied land is modified, that six story tenement houses will continue to go up along the transit lines and the density per acre will continue to grow, despite the fact that of the 209,218 acres of land in greater New York, after deducting the area of parks, cemeteries and swamp lands, it is estimated that 172,000 acres is available for homes. With 500 persons to the acre this would allow for a population of 86,000,000 persons. If used as the present building laws would permit, according to the statisticians—at the rate of 1,300 persons to the acre—this ground would accommodate 135,991,700 persons, or the entire population of the North American Continent, with a considerable number from South America as well.

This is what the editor of "Federation," the organ of the Federation of Churches,

take action to overcome it. The Mayor's Congestion Commission, among its recommendations for relieving and preventing congestion, included the proposal that the Board of Aldermen, subject to the approval of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, should have authority to establish different building regulations for different sections of the city. A sub-committee drafted a bill giving power to divide the city into zones or districts, and make appropriate regulations for the various classes of buildings for which the districts were best adapted. This bill was introduced and is before the Legislature.

In a number of the European countries authority has been given to municipal authorities to formulate building codes. In Vienna nearly thirty years ago the zone system was adopted. It permitted the construction of buildings six or seven stories high in the centre of the city, restricted the height of buildings in outlying districts to two stories, and reduced the proportion of the lot which might be occupied by buildings to a much smaller percentage than in the inner sections of the city. Four years ago even more drastic regulations

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